

VALLEY OF THE MOON WATER DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
May 25, 2004

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Valley of the Moon Water District was held on Tuesday, May 25, 2004, in the Multi Purpose Building of the Altimira Middle School at 17805 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, California.

1. CALL TO ORDER - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - ROLL CALL

President Michael Woods called the meeting to order at 6:40 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll Call by **Deputy Secretary Shari Walk** noted the following present:

Directors Present:	Mark Bramfitt Ron Prushko Sanford Smith Michael Woods
Directors Absent:	Ed Kenny (Excused)
District Personnel:	Shari Walk, Office Supervisor Bob Freeland, Special Projects Coordinator
General Manager:	Lee Harry
Board Secretary:	Shari Walk
Public Present:	Louise Bielfelt, Sherm Bielfelt, Ken Borba, Krishna Kumar, Andrea Perry, Steve Perry, Carrie Pollard, Jan Youden, three unidentified members of the audience, and Sandi Hansen for the Sonoma Index-Tribune

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

3. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A. The Valley of the Moon Water District Public Workshop Regarding the New Tiered Water Rates and the Way to Cut Down on Water Use by Eliminating Wasteful Practices Regarding Landscape Irrigation

1. Presentation by District General Manager Regarding New Rates

General Manager Lee Harry reported that a new water rate for the VOMWD had become effective January 1, 2004. The new rate was based on a professional study by the consulting firm of CH2MHill,

which had evaluated the VOMWD's rate structure and the water usage of the District. Out of that evaluation a water rate had been recommended that encouraged conservation, particularly for the high end users, while offering a benefit to those who used a small amount of water.

Mr. Harry advised that the VOMWD used a bimonthly billing period. The rate structure had been designed to be revenue neutral. The new rate structure had not been proposed to accommodate future growth and required enhancements to the system, and to allow the VOMWD to remain within its legal entitlements from the primary water provider. The new rate structure applied to single family residential customers only.

Mr. Harry described the new rate structure as the beginning step of the VOMWD's adoption of the 14 Best Management Practices for water conservation, one of which was a conservation based rate structure. He noted that the market had been saturated the last couple of years with internal devices through the VOMWD's giveaway programs. While the new rate structure did not currently apply to multi family residential, institutional or commercial users, it might be considered for those uses in the future.

Mr. Harry emphasized that the rate structure was intended to promote conservation, encourage efficient and wise water use inside and outside the home, and allow the VOMWD to remain within its water entitlement contracts with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) with the source of the water being the Russian River system. He explained that the water rate structure was intended to discourage water use during the summer months, which was the peak period. During the summer the VOMWD was close to its summer purchase limits and anything to avoid exceeding those limits would have to be pursued to avoid the major infrastructure costs associated with obtaining additional water supplies.

Mr. Harry compared the VOMWD's old rate with the current (new) rate, where one billing unit equaled 1,000 gallons of water. The prior uniform rate was \$2.86 per unit. The current rate was described as a tiered rate based on bimonthly water use.

Up to 18 billing units = \$2.38 unit
19 to 40 billing units = 3.56 unit
Over 40 billing units = 5.34 unit

The VOMWD's intent was to encourage efficient landscaping, the reduction of turf and the planting of native landscaping, along with other efforts to reduce the use of water.

Mr. Harry offered some examples of the water bills of a range of water users between the old and the current rate structures: Each total shown included a \$10 service fee.

Low Water User (10,000 gallons per two months use)
\$2.86 x 10 = \$38.60 (Old Rate)
\$2.38 x 10 - \$33.80 (Current Rate)

Average Water User (18,000 gallons per two months use)
\$2.86 x 18 = \$61.48
\$2.38 x 18 - \$52.84

Moderately High Water User (40,000 gallons per two months use)
\$2.86 x 40 = \$124.40
(\$2.38 x 18)+(\$3.56 x 22) = \$131.16

High Water User (100,000 gallons per two months use)

$\$2.86 \times 100 = \296.00

$(\$2.38 \times 18) + (\$3.56 \times 22) + (\$5.34 \times 60) = \451.56

Very High Water User (200,000 gallons per two months use)

$\$2.86 \times 200 = \582.00

$(\$2.38 \times 18) + (\$3.56 \times 22) + (\$5.34 \times 160) = \985.56

Mr. Harry explained that there were some VOMWD ratepayers who used more than 200,000 gallons of water during the two month billing cycle. He emphasized that the focus of the workshop was on outside water use to ensure the efficient and wise use of water, primarily for irrigation purposes.

2. Presentation by District Special Projects Coordinator Regarding Irrigation System Maintenance

Special Projects Coordinator Bob Freeland pointed out that one of the biggest water wasters was irrigation water systems, with broken heads and timers that had been set too long. While older systems could present waste concerns and should be tuned up, problems with new systems involved poor design by including too few sprinkler heads, for instance.

Mr. Freeland recommended visual inspections of sprinklers to make certain that they were working properly. He commented that one of the biggest problems was that irrigation heads could inadvertently be moved from $\frac{1}{2}$ turn to $\frac{1}{4}$ turn spreads resulting in instantaneous brown spots. Nighttime watering would not allow visual inspections to determine whether or not the sprinklers were working properly. He explained that old and worn out equipment, such as old brass sprinkler heads, distributed too much water. He added that many systems in the Valley had been installed in the 1970's and the 1980's and those systems would have to be updated. With the summertime demand, pressure on the system dropped back significantly. He explained that a tilted sprinkler head could waste a significant amount of water, as could incorrect pressures in the sprinkler system since high-pressure systems could result in a significant loss of water. He recommended that systems be designed with head to head coverage.

Mr. Freeland explained how a homeowner could check the efficiency of a sprinkler system to measure the amount of water being provided to each portion of the area being irrigated. He urged the visual inspection of sprinkler systems to verify that the system was working properly. He also described information available to VOMWD ratepayers to facilitate efficiency checks, proper watering, spacing, planting and for drip irrigation plans, and he offered to help those who had questions with respect to his/her watering needs.

3. Presentation by Sonoma County Water Agency Conservation Specialist Regarding Water Efficient Landscapes

Conservation Specialist Carrie Pollard with the SCWA spoke to water efficient landscapes.

Ms. Pollard described a number of programs to encourage conservation, including the Ultra Low Flush Toilet Rebate Program for Sanitation and/or VOMWD customers, a Low Flow Hardware Retrofit Program for homes older than 1992, High Efficiency Clothes Washers for residential and commercial areas and other programs and information available to the public to encourage water savings.

Ms. Pollard also displayed a portion of a CD available for SCWA and VOMWD customers called *Water Wise Gardening, Sonoma and Marin Counties*. She described the CD as one of the major ways to apprise

the public of water conservation methods. The CD included tips on irrigation maintenance and descriptions of over 1,000 plants to help in the design and low maintenance of water-thrifty irrigation and other garden care tips, such as when and how to water, how to design a water system, targeting new landscaping and what could be done with existing landscaping.

As highlighted by Mr. Freeland, **Ms. Pollard** recommended the following:

- Monthly inspection of irrigation equipment to look for broken sprinkler heads and turned heads and to check for leaks and breaks;
- Checking hardware compatibility with replacement parts since not all sprinkler equipment worked together;
- Protecting outdoor water pipes;
- ET (Evapotranspiration) guidelines;
- Learning how to do repeat cycle on irrigation controllers for better water coverage;
- Updating irrigation schedules each season;
- Avoiding runoff and overspray; and
- Turning off water systems during the winter.

For garden maintenance and watering tips, **Ms. Pollard** recommended the following:

- 800 square feet is adequate as manageable avoiding extensive maintenance;
- Adding 3 inches of mulch around bedding plants to avoid evaporation;
- Conversion to a drip system for bedding plants to save water and reduce evaporation;
- Plants with similar water needs should be grouped together;
- Water when cool during the evenings or early morning;
- Observe irrigation while operating;
- Watering lawns in two short cycles is better than one long cycle;
- Aerate lawns; and
- Eliminate run-off.

Mr. Harry stated with respect to irrigation systems and leaks that it was critical with the tiered water rates that property owners check his/her systems carefully since the VOMWD had a new Water Rate Adjustment Policy. While the VOMWD used to allow adjustments on irrigation systems, that was not currently done and there was no credit for broken irrigation systems. With no observation or monitoring of irrigation systems, he stated that a broken line could result in a significant water bill.

Mr. Harry described the numerous public notices and notices in billings to apprise VOMWD ratepayers of the new rate structure and where examples of how the structure would work had been provided. He stated that the current workshop had been advertised in the Sonoma Index Tribune over the last several weeks. He emphasized that the VOMWD ratepayers who were high water users would see differences in his/her bills in July. Everything had been done, in excess of the public noticing that was required, to inform customers of the new rate structure.

4. Question and Answer Period Conducted by Board President

President Woods inquired of the number of VOMWD ratepayers in the highest tiered category, to which **Mr. Harry** stated that 10 percent of VOMWD water users used 30 percent of the VOMWD's water, representing over 600 customers.

Ms. Pollard explained, when asked, that the CD would be available in the VOMWD Office along with other water saving information and information related to other water conservation programs.

Mr. Freeland reiterated his availability to communicate with those who were interested in receiving more information or in having questions or concerns addressed.

An unidentified woman sought a clarification of the charges related to irrigation, particularly if that irrigation was on property of an acre or more in size. **Mr. Harry** advised her that if the owner of a one-acre property had a spray irrigation system on that one acre that owner was within the VOMWD's target for water conservation. He emphasized that the larger areas were being encouraged to use efficient irrigation methods. The current proposal represented the VOMWD's best effort to reduce wasteful irrigation practices

President Woods emphasized that the VOMWD was not anti-landscaping and not anti-large lots. The VOMWD wanted to see those with large lots utilize water efficient landscaping and drip systems.

There were no other comments or questions.

President Woods noted the resources available to VOMWD ratepayers to find solutions to high water use.

12. ADJOURNMENT

President Woods thanked all those present for attending the workshop and adjourned the workshop at 7:28 P.M. The next scheduled meeting is a Regular Meeting on June 1, 2004 at 6:30 P.M.

Shari Walk, Deputy Board Secretary